Our past is our future

Communities in Kathmandu Valley’s historic towns have revived age-old traditions and craftsmanship to rebuild after every earthquake in the past. The disasters provided the opportunity to revitalise ancient art, architecture, traditional techniques for wood carving and metal work. Nearly four years after the 2015 earthquake, monuments like the Patan Museum (above) are examples of Kathmandu Valley’s living heritage that attract pilgrims and tourists.

Every journey is a new chapter

Rising from the turquoise waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea, the seven islands of the Aeolian archipelago will inspire stories of its raw, natural beauty. Paddle into mysterious coves, climb a smouldering volcano, or discover the foundations of ancient Bronze Age settlements.

Make the world your story in one of more than 160 destinations worldwide.

- Visit qatarairways.com/myp
- Contact our Qatar Airways sales office at +977 1 440467 or your preferred travel agency
CLIMATE DAMAGE

Climate change is global, it does not respect national boundaries. Neither should its solution. The only way we can save the biosphere from anthropogenic carbon emissions is to reduce our use of fossil fuels. There is no other way.

The latest report from the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the findings presented at the Climate Summit in Kathmandu last week show that warming trends are much worse than we thought. This effect is already seen in the last few years which have been the hottest since records started being kept.

In September this week, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) released its long-awaited assessment which shows that the Himalayan mountains are melting faster than anyone expected. Altitude-Dependent Warming and deposition of pollution particles are amplifying the trend. (See page 8)

An analysis of the assessment and interview with ICIMOD’s David Meldrum indicate that even a 1°C loss during the rest of this century will have serious consequences for 1.6 billion people living downstream from the Himalayas. And that is just the best-case scenario, in all probability carbon reduction targets to keep warming within 1.5°C will not be met, meaning that two-thirds of the glaciers will be gone by 2100. Another recent report is even more apocalyptic: 90% of the glaciers below 4,000 meters will vanish during this century.

Now that we know things are much worse than we thought, what are we going to do about it? Nepal Times also talked this week with Celso Joubert Sindhow, who has just stepped down as chair of the Least Developed Countries Group in the UN climate change negotiation process (page 7) who is in Kathmandu for a consultative workshop of the Asia-Pacific region.

Sindhow argues that least-developed, landlocked mountainous countries like Nepal should move from soon seeking funds for climate change adaptation, and launch national strategies to build up carbon stock and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Indeed, what Nepal does or does not do is not just about the planet. With an annual carbon footprint of 0.12 tons per capita, Nepal’s footprint is in 60 km. Nepal’s contribution is minimal compared to the gas guzzlers. However, Nepal’s petroleum demand is the fastest growing in the world and has more than doubled in the last two years, increasing our trade imbalance with India. Nepal exports 94% of its last year’s 9 million in importing petrol, diesel and gas, widening the country’s already worsening trade deficit.

The argument is that since we did not create the climate crisis, we should just try to adapt and do not blame anybody.

Another recent report, State of Climate Action in Nepal says Nepal also needs to take mitigation action, not only because it will help us save our mountains from melting but, much more importantly, to save the country’s fossil-based economy from collapse.

WINTER TREKKING

It is time to go on a winter trek on the Annapurna Base Camp and quite another to set out to cross high exposed passes over 5,000m (The ABC Trek) or the ever popular Langtang Trek in Nepal, Monks Dandipa, #245. Take great care people die every year taking too far for comfort and altitude sickness in the Himalayas in the winter.

Robin Marston

This is indeed great news for tourists as well as the local people too.

Pravin Sharma

FAKE RESCUES

Apparenly not cracking down enough by the government (Nepal trekking industry in damage control mode) Shrihari Oja, #454. To clean up the industry and change the threatens.

Giancarlo Cattaneo

In a textbook tactic of deflection and redirection, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation have tried to take the focus away from the companies accused of fraud against insurers and instead focus their investigation on ‘Traveler’s Assist’. While we display any investigation into our company, we question the motives of a government trying to tarnish the reputation of a trusted assistance company. The fact that the government of Nepal has accused me of being on a one-man crusade to tarnish the reputation of Nepal is laughable... I want to make Nepal a safer place for tourists and less risky for insurers.

Danny Kaire

THE KARAKAL

I hope hydroelectric projects on Karnali never happen. (The Karnali, Ramjat, #492) It will be environmentally devastating, plus the growth of millions of people will depend on the water. Let’s not go down this road.

Steve Lockett

RIP JOHN

Very good detailed write up, it gives us a detailed glimpse of John Edward’s character (Sir John R. Edwards, #30). We all miss him a lot.

Deepak Chatri

ONLINE PACKAGES

WHATS TRENDING

The ABCs of a winter trek in Nepal by Shubha Shareen

Trekking now doesn’t have to be a limited spring and autumn activity. Winter trekking is catching up and it now possible to trek in the hills with snow and blankets. Go online for the photo story of this recent story trek to Annapurna Base Camp.

Most read and shared on Facebook

Most popular on Twitter
DISCOVER MORE: EUROPE
WITH THE AIRLINE THAT FLIES TO MORE COUNTRIES THAN ANY OTHER

TURKISHAIRLINES.COM
A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

BERLIN
LONDON
PARIS
DISCOVER MORE: EUROPE

WITH THE AIRLINE THAT FLIES TO MORE COUNTRIES THAN ANY OTHER

TURKISHAIRLINES.COM
A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER ⭐
The end of history
Our text books and teachers are so boring, no one is enrolling to study Nepal's diverse past

Anil Chitrakar
President of Siddhath

Indo-French-American with Nepali twist

Originally from India, crafted with a French twist, made in the US, and served in Nepal. It is the award winning fusion restaurant named Le Môch, continuing to do what it does best here in Kathmandu. If you are here, the fusion restaurant completes its second year in Nepal, surprising along with new dishes full of subtleties and surprises.

The menu of Le Môch is a repertoire of eating chicken or panzer tikka for salad then let's start the journey from here. The strong flavors of tikka is accompanied by creamy avocado, green leaves and a touch of olive to make a healthy bite. Nothing here is too much or too little, not even the pieces of chicken or paneer. But if you still want les Epinards, the classic salad of crunchy fried baby spinach, dates, almonds, yogurt, chilis with bestest rice. You might think they have twisted this one too, but it has the exact flavor of the cuisine, including that of the fresh mint used. Every dish at Le Môch starts at Rs377, including all taxes and a bottle of Coke.

If you are here for dinner, make space for the main courses, of course. Poach Grilled salmon, rack of lamb and a whole duck are the signature dishes, which have come all the way from the main restaurant in DC. The kitchen uses all local meat to not have any guests disappointed. Also try Shrimp Mad Rasu, as Chef Ajay Pudasaini knows what he is doing to his seafood very well.

For all vegetarians out there, the extensive 8-4-2 carte menu at Le Môch also incorporates a whole plate dedicated to dishes of chickpeas, okra, cauliflower, tofu, paneer, peas, greens, potatoes and many more to go with basmati rice, biryani, red or naan. Here you will find most of the dishes integrated with fresh ingredients and locally, especially curry leaves.

At Le Môch, Chef Pudasaini combines the bold and exciting flavors of India, which he learnt during his stay in the US, with the sophistication and elegant presentation that he perfected by learning from Michelin Star Chefs. The experience is accompanied by a collection of contemporary art and creative interior design of the restaurant to give guests a one of a kind and wholesome experience. Sikkuma Rai

Le Môch
Thamel, Lalitpur, Nepal (01) 5227437

BIZ BRIEFS

CNC Production Aid (Aide aux défenseurs du montagne), on the basis of all script. Under the direction of Abhik Sen and Rajmohan, the film will capture the final three years of the second long civil war through the eyes of a counting soldier. For casting contact: 9840993643

Oppon expansion: Oppon, the Chinese smartphone brand, has expanded to market and reached 4 new markets with launch of new phone and also has 16 new products in the United Kingdom, South Africa, Turkey and Poland. Further it has opened a base for MNC's regional operations at Dubai, UAE, and has already been active in various European countries.

Football support: The AFC announced a long official deal to sign up Interlink Club, an association football club, in Manir. The club will now be known as the Dikar Boys Interlink Club throughout their footballing duration, and the club's bar will host match watching and emotional support.

Times
8-14 FEBRUARY 2015 ISSUE

NATION
Supreme Court weighs in on Ncell tax dispute

Sharad Ojha

The Supreme Court verdict on Wednesday requiring the Malaysian company Axiata and Ncell Nepal to pay billions of capital gains tax on their purchase of Nepal’s largest private telecom provider Ncell will end a controversy that has dragged on for three years, but is expected to further chill Nepal’s foreign investment climate.

A full bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice Chamkor Shumsher Rana decided after two days of hearings that Reynolds Holdings Ltd was a shell company and the real owner of Ncell was Axiata, and it was liable to pay the tax along with Ncell Nepal. Justices Rana, Mira Karki, Bidhurambar Prasad Shrestha, Ananda Mohan Bhattarai and Tarika Subairo Mostian were delivering an open public interest litigation filed by former secretary and advocate Dwiwina Nibiung and six others that Axiata Nepal and Axiata were responsible to pay capital gains tax when they bought the company from the Swedish-Finnish telecom company TeliaSonera in 2015.

When TeliaSonera said Reynolds Holdings shares in Ncell to Axiata for over $1 billion, Nepal’s Large Taxpayers’ Office had said Reynolds owed the government Rs15.5 billion in taxes and demanded it pay the amount and fines as a total of Rs16.5 billion. Ncell Nepal refused to pay that full amount, and transferred only Rs2 billion capital gains tax. After this, the writ was filed, and the Supreme Court on Wednesday also rejected a case filed by Ncell.

The case became controversial after two foreign investors’ traded ownership of a Nepal-based telecom company. Since TeliaSonera has already left Nepal, the Court found that the buyer is liable to pay capital gains tax if the seller did not.

Senior advocate Surendra Bhandari says that it is international practice that the seller has to pay capital gains tax on any site of assets, but says the Supreme Court is right in asserting that the seller was allowed to leave the country without paying tax and to put the asset on the buyer.

Wednesday’s decision now sets a precedent for the buyer to also be responsible for paying capital gains tax.

Officials at the Internal Revenue Service say that although the country’s treasury will benefit from the tax payment, there has been no investigation into why the seller was allowed to get away without paying taxes, and hence the case will have negative repercussions on future investments.

Eighty percent of Ncell’s ownership is with Reynolds Holding registered in the British Virgin Islands and 20% with Nippon Gumi Kishaisha. Nepal’s main promoter was Reynolds Holding through TeliaSonera’s office in Norway.

According to Nepal’s tax laws, TeliaSonera’s sale of Ncell to Axiata had a capital gains tax liability of Rs0.5 billion. Axiata had written to the Internal Revenue Office before the sale that it was liable to pay capital gains tax in Nepal, but there was no reply from its director at the time, Chudamani Sharma.

After that, the tax controversy got mixed in politics, with various party leaders and former CIA chief Lubman Singh Kurel urging the government to deal with the thing at the rightful time. Says advocate Bhandari.

“\n“The Supreme Court decision seems to be driven by the logic that any buyer should first inquire about the liabilities of the seller before any purchase.”

However, another retired revenue official said it is unfair to blame Axiata, and asked it to pay capital gains tax that should have been paid by TeliaSonera. He says the scrutiny by parties here are the politicians who allowed TeliaSonera to leave without paying taxes, and this will diminish Nepal’s investment climate just before an investment summit planned for next month, and after Prime Minister KP Oli’s visit to Davos with the message that Nepal was open for business.

The Supreme Court verdict has also exposed a loophole in Nepal’s tax laws that allows shell companies to get away without paying taxes. TeliaSonera had its dividends frozen in Nepal by the Large Taxpayers’ Office, but the Supreme Court allowed the company to repatriate its profits.

According to the Nepal Inland Revenue Department, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, Nepal owners had used the company to launder money as foreign direct investment. Ajay K Bijayal, a businessman close to the former Maoist party and Bindita Mahato of the Federal Socialist Forum Nepal and brother of billionaire overseas Nepali entrepreneur Mahato were implicated in documents leaked through the Panama Papers about tax havens.

The verdict this week opens the door for Nepal to tax CCl that is coming in from offshore tax havens.
In her recent article in this journal, Neelima Khatri describes the plight of many elderly Nepalis now living in the UK, most of them ex-Gurkhas and their wives. The families get regular pension, heating allowances and rent support, free public transport, as well as access to the British National Health Service.

THE GADFLY
David Seddon

But there are also costs, which include living away from their home country in a strange land among strangers, without the personal, social and cultural comforts of their villages. Many pine for Nepal, and some decide to return home. But women, particularly widows who speak little English, have few non-Nepali friends, and remain isolated in their homes in towns like in Salisbury or Aldershot. The weather does not help, and they must remain house-bound or within a limited area of the city missing their children and grandchildren.

The Gurkha Welfare Trust runs advice centres which work closely with government bodies like the Royal British Legion to support army veterans. Numerous local charities are connected with the army also help, as well as community services for older people, including mental health diagnosis, treatment and support, provided by the local council and by the health services.

But much of this is cold comfort to elderly Nepali men and women, who have settled in Britain, and who would, ideally, flock back to Nepal to be with their families and friends — if only they could be assured of more financial support, including better and less costly health care.

The elderly in Nepal have traditionally been able to count on family support. But, as more older people live longer, the financial burden on families has increased. Nepal’s average life span has increased from 33 for men and 37 for women in 1961, to 68 for men and 72 for women in 2014. By 2018, there were nearly 3 million people over 60 in Nepal. Family fragmentation has also resulted in physical separation between older grandparents and their children and grandchildren.

Consequently, even back in Nepal, more elderly men and women are living apart from their closest family members than ever before. Many are now suffering from the same problems as those settled in the UK, but without pensions, allowances, and access to free medical services.

There are relatively few specialised institutions for support and care of the elderly in Nepal. The Gurkha Welfare Trust cares for ex-Gurkhas and their families with Welfare Pensions to veterans and widows and medical treatment.

But there are very few examples of Nepal of private ‘care homes’ and ‘retirement villages’ that exist in the UK.

There is now some state support, but it remains patchily limited. The non-contributory social pension scheme introduced in 1998 was intended to provide allowances to older people aged 50 and above, to older dolls and people living in the Kathmandu Zone aged 60 and above, and to poor widows aged 60 and above. The allowance was doubled to Rs2000 and the age of eligibility reduced to 60, but the scheme remains inadequately implemented.

It is estimated by Pension Watch (Help Age International) that the number of people receiving an allowance is around 63,000, and 47% over 65 in Nepal receive a non-contributory pension, while 9% have a contributory pension.

The total cost of the scheme is Rs45 billion, or 0.7% of GDP. By 2050, when the estimated number of Nepalis over 80 will be around 6.5 million, the cost will have more than doubled even if the same proportion of the budget is allocated to the scheme.

Last year, Prime Minister Oli proposed a social security scheme for private sector employees to provide for life-long pensions and reduce the fiscal burden by demanding that employers deposit 31% of the basic salary (20% from employers and 11% from employees) into a Social Security Fund. After 15 years, private sector employees would be entitled to lifelong pensions, just like retired government employees.

Fighting for equality
In May 2009, the Labour government under Tony Blair was obliged by public pressure to enable Gurkhas who retired before 1 July 1987 with at least four years’ service to settle with their families in the UK, that being the date when the Gurkha Brigade headquarters moved from Hong Kong to Britain.

Even before that, in March 2007, pay, pensions and terms of service of serving Gurkhas were equalised with those of regular British Army personnel and equal pensions were granted to those enlisted from 1 October 1993, but about 15,000 pensioners and 6,000 widows did not benefit.

On 10 June 2011, the British Gurkha Welfare Society lodged a case with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) claiming that Gurkhas had been paid significantly lower pensions than their British counterparts. On 15 September 2016, the ECHR dealt the hopes of thousands of ex-Gurkhas for equal pensions.

Yeti Airlines along with Tara Air offers the widest network in Nepal.
From playing victim to proactive leadership on climate

Gebre Jemile Endalew has been involved in UN negotiations on climate change since 2008 as a core member of the Ethiopian negotiating team. Last year, he stepped down as Chair of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group on Climate Change, of which Nepal is a member and Bhutan is the new Chair.

Currently, Endalew is an adviser at the Korea-based Global Green Growth Institute. Endalew was in Kathmandu this week for consultations on resilience and adaptation for Asia-Pacific members of the LDC group. He spoke to Nepal Times on how least-developed countries like Nepal can cope with climate change.

Similarities between Nepal and Ethiopia

Nepal and Ethiopia have a lot in common. We are LDCs, we are landlocked, face severe impacts of global climate change despite not being major greenhouse gas emitters. And we are both mountainous countries. Mountain ecosystems are highly fragile in terms of climate change impacts, as proven by the study released this week by ICIMOD. Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment and the IPCC_5_1.5 Degree World Report.

We know that a 1.5 degree world is achievable, but even an increase of one degree in global average temperature has major consequences ranging from forest fires, extreme weather events to changing monsoon patterns. Yet some of the countries were still in denial at the Climate Summit in Poland. But we LDCs have been consistent in terms of our reflections about the 1.5 degree report and we believe it will be taken up at the UN Secretary General’s meeting in September in New York.

Climate justice

While we need to continue to push big emitters for more pledges for adaptation, we cannot completely depend on compensation to address the impact of climate change on our people. Trillions were promised at the Climate summit in Poland but it will take years to materialise. And now that the number of big emitters have increased, and include many of our own countries, reimbursement alone will not take us anywhere in terms of investments required.

If we stick to historical responsibility for carbon emissions, we will not arrive at a solution. If we wait for developed countries to pledge resources, we will not be able to adapt to the urgent impacts that are already being felt. So governments in countries like Nepal and Ethiopia need to feel for domestic financial resources and engage the private sector in solutions to generate revenue. We need to move out of the victim narrative to proactive leadership to deal with climate change.

In fact, Nepal can be a leader in terms of developing innovative mitigation action, even if it may have a much smaller carbon footprint compared to other countries. Better ecosystem and resource management here can reduce the risks of flooding in lower catchment areas of India and Bangladesh.

And to be honest, past actions cannot be blamed when people were just trying to improve their lives. Early post-industrial emissions were not deliberate. The biggest blunder of all would be for our leaders to repeat the same mistakes with the knowledge we have today about the impact of greenhouse gases.

Turning the clock back

Countries like the US and Brazil are regressing on prior commitments when it comes to climate change action. But I’m a bit of an optimist myself. Despite a somewhat bleak scenario at the leadership level, what is happening on the ground is encouraging. We see peaks in investment on renewable energy around the world including in the US, and these newer cleaner technologies are cheaper and more easily accessible to the people.

Mitigation or adaptation?

Mitigation, adaptation and development have to go together. There is no point in making a distinction. Mitigation measures to reduce fossil fuel dependence eventually contribute to development and resilience. For example, electricity generated from hydropower improves the living standard of the people while also reducing greenhouse gases.

Initially there was a misconception that mitigation was not for developing countries. We know now that everyone has to be involved in the global mitigation process, not just to save the planet but also to save our economies.

All of this requires good leadership. Unless there is political guidance, whatever investments in renewable energy might be either lost or abandoned. Good governance is a key to better planning and implementation to cope with climate impact.
Turning on the heat

Unprecedented in recorded history, there was a 100 degree difference in temperature between the cold, frozen and eastern hemispheres last week. While parts of Australia baked in recent 50°C heat, in North America hills were over with the mercury plunging to -50°C.

CLIMATE FOR CHANGE
Ajaya Dixit

Somehow in between Nepal, heavy winter snow has blanketed the mountains after a break of almost 12 years. That fact that such snowfall was seen as abnormal, indicated just how far we from the normal we have descended.

The return of winter snow in Nepal and the simultaneous extreme heat and cold in the arid poles actually points to the importance of weather patterns brought by climate change. More climate models agree that the rise in global average temperature due to the continued emission of carbon dioxide will result in a mixture of temperature rise over land, and particularly in the higher mid-latitude regions. The snowfall has been regulating upward with partial melting snow, and decreased seasonal snow and ice cover has started flooding melt flows in rivers.

As snow dignifying in the Himalaya start going dry in the summer season, there is serious concern about longer term. In a few weeks, temperatures across northern South Asia will start going up. July-August temperatures will reach 40°C in many places. Nights will not cool down enough, and humidity will also rise. At higher humidity, the human body cannot release heat through sweat evaporation fast enough to cool itself. Most people cannot remain unproTECTED in the open for more than 1 hour at temperatures above 37°C.

A recent study of modifications in temperature and humidity in the Indo and Ganges plains by the US based National Center of Atmospheric Research, and IIT-jodhpur found that by 2058, most of June, July and August days and nights will hover about the 37°C threshold. A later study by MRC researchers blamed it directly how worse in the Indus-Ganges plains, mainly in the numbers growing across India, Pakistan and Nepal in summer will shoot up.

The rapid degradation of natural ecosystems within and around many of our cities has removed heat sinks. Urban heat emissions, as conditions, concrete and asphalt pavements, and air pollution trapping dust between buildings continue to raise the temperature in core cities. These urban heat islands will amplify global warming, with significant impact on low-income families and the poor living in suburban housing, locking unsafe drinking water, basic energy, and without direct access to air conditioning.

Even fair conditions was affordable for poor and low-income families, running them would require additional energy from own customized electricity grids. In Australia’s 1930s heat wave event, architects advised residents to delay using washing machines and dishwashers, and recruited healthy people to consider keeping their air conditioners at 32°C to save energy. Older model air conditioners also block MCO – chemical coolants which are about 7,000 times more potent greenhouse gases than carbon dioxide.

As global temperature rises, Nepal’s lower river valleys of the Bowak and the Mahakali, are now in a far different. People will see many days when the safe temperature humidity threshold will exceed 35°C. East in Kathmandu, June-August will soon hotter days and global warming combines with the urban heat bubble to make it uncomfortable to handle and unlivable.

Nepal’s policies, plans and actions have yet taken the threat of heat risk seriously. Nor have we begun to systematically assess changes in local temperatures and humidity regimes.

Reducing the threat of increasing heat requires us to carefully weigh the way we design homes, build infrastructure, deliver and manage energy, food, goods, and healthcare. Stirling to clean energy forms of energy for cooking and public transportation would give us the flexibility needed to minimize growing threat of heat and adapt.

Urban and rural municipalities can begin working on solutions without waiting for national policies. Local governments have the authority and their programs must emphasize mobilization and conservation of natural ecosystems, water sources, and provide incentives for climate-friendly home designs and materials. Public health systems need to be better prepared to respond immediately to the elderly, children and pregnant women with heat stress.

Peristeras and low dry season flow of them are going to affect millions living downstream from the streams in Nepal and beyond. In the mid-lower, developed and large middle-income countries in Asia need to significantly cut emission of green house gases. Their is no other way.

And while they mitigate carbon use, we in Nepal need to be prepared for low river flows in the dry season, and first ways to minimize the impact of prolonged dry waves. The one way is only taking action, the higher will be the future end of measures we will have to take to adapt to the heat.

Ajaya Dixit is a Senior Director of Kathmandu based SET- Nepal. His monthly column Climate Change with deals with impact of global warming in Nepal.

Terrorizing assess a Himalayan men

New report predicts the impact of climate change: mountains may be much worse than we thought

While the global media’s attention is on the Greenland ice sheet, the Arctic and eastern Antarctica, a landmark report released this week shows that the Himalaya will face catastrophic meltdown during this century if there is no immediate effort to reduce the world’s carbon emissions.

The voluminous 627-page report titled “Himal-Asia Himalaya Assessment: Climate Change, Sustainability and People” put together by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) states that even in the best-case scenario, the Himalayan mountains will lose more than one-third of their ice by the end of this century. An earlier report was even scarier, it said the Mt Everest region would lose 90% of its ice by 2100.

But that would happen only if global average temperature can be capped at a 1.5°C increase above pre-industrial levels. Most scientists agree that target is unlikely to be met. If current emission trends continue, the world will actually be hotter by between 4.2-6.5°C by 2100 – in which case two-thirds of Himalayan glaciers will be gone.

Himalayan peaks are warming between 0.3 to 0.7°C faster than the global average, and the loss of their ice would have devastating consequences for 1.6 billion people living in the mountains and downstream countries. Climate models show that summer flow in the Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra and their snow-fed tributaries will actually rise till 2050 as the glaciers melt away, but will start decreasing after that because there will be no more ice left. Measurements show that glaciers in the Central and Eastern Himalaya are shrinking at 40cm/year, and some are receding up to 30m/year.

After the controversy surrounding a 2007 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that predicted all Himalayan glaciers would be gone by 2035, scientists have been much more careful in making similarly wild predictions. Which is why ICIMOD deployed 210 scientists from 20 countries in this five-year study to assess
David Molden, head of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), spoke with Nepali Times about the Centre’s new Himalayan Assessment and some of the key findings and recommendations.

Nepali Times: Why was an assessment needed at this time?
David Molden: We really don’t know what is happening in our mountains. We wanted to bring experts together to discuss what is happening and to make some strong policy recommendations at a time when we are facing major sustainable development issues.

What are some of the key findings?
Mountains warm faster than the global average, a phenomenon known as “mountainous amplification.” This means if it’s 1.5 degrees warmer, the warming in the mountains will be even greater. But if we follow the current trajectory, we will see warming of up to 3.5 or 7 degrees in mountain areas by 2100. (Inflatational changes, mountain summits are different problems like migration and deforestation. All of these changes need to be considered in managing mountain resources.)

One particular prediction is shocking, that our mountains will lose 64% of their glaciers by the end of the century. But even if it’s 1.5 degrees, we would lose about one-third of our glaciers. If present trends continue, then we would lose two-thirds of our glaciers, which is quite frightening. In a way, it is like a thermometer. As it’s a sign of climate change. But what is it saying is that climate impacts in the mountains can be quite severe.

It looks like those impacts are worse than the worst case scenario predicted in Paris two years ago.

I sensed that in Paris they based a lot of things on the 2014 IPCC report. It is an update of the assessments after their controversial 2007 predictions on the Himalayas. Now we are coming out with a clearer understanding, and the U.S. report will have a special cross-cutting chapter on mountains.

But don’t we already have enough evidence? Do we still need more research? Isn’t it time to start taking action?
We know enough to take action. But in the situation of ever-increasing change, more science and information will help policymakers make better choices and take more informed decisions. A mountain, environment and science foundation work together. In fact, we have seen that the bulk of the predicted impact assessment report itself was wide-ranging needs to link cooperation across countries to deal with climate change.

Two ICIMOD member countries are major fossil fuel users. Isn’t it time we started looking beyond adaptation to mitigation?
We really had a regional meeting for Asia Pacific countries on environment and what came out strongly was that Nepal had a strong commitment to the environment. Nepal is taking significant steps in mitigation, as is India. In addition, the findings to date need not mean a discussion with greenhouse gas emitting countries and taking urgent action. We have to keep the world at 1.5 degrees warming. Those measures are going to be in deep trouble.

Your report also deals with air pollution and urban areas. What are some key recommendations to reduce risk?
Air pollution is a slow moving natural disaster. The black carbon is all mixed up, settles in the glaze and increases their melt, and also disrupts heating and cooling effects of the atmosphere. We have to make sure that we take down the smoke and reduce emissions from small-scale industries, brick kilns, etc. As far as natural disasters are the flood, drought, avalanches and earthquakes, we have to be better prepared. We need to focus on water systems and deliver the infrastructure to people through fixed early warning systems, for example.

CLIMATE TALK

"If we can't cap warming at 1.5°, these mountains are in trouble"
The Art Market

Marking its 4th anniversary, The Art Market is here again with books, paintings, art prints, miniature paintings, glass products and art supplies acquired by myself, music workshops, and craft workshops. Every February 1-5, The Helicon House, Sohna, (Haryana) 122053

Rhythm and sound

A vocal workshop by singer and percussionist from Delhi, Mustafa Ali. In her music you can discover jazz, pop and folk rhythms, which blend into exciting and captivating world music. 12-14 February, 10am-5pm, Kathmandu Art Center, Sankar, Kathmandu, (Nepal) 11400

National Reading Mela

Discussion and debate on the reading culture of Nepal with a dozen of writers, analysts and intellectuals. The festival with the slogan ‘Books from reading’ will be entertained with literary and musical performances. 9-14 February, Rani Pokhri Pratishthan, Khokana, (Nepal) 11500

Albatross

Transmitting the sound of Nepal’s aboriginal music and exploring contemporary issues of Nepal through lyrics. Albatross is back on stage to unite the audience together. 9 February, 7pm onwards, Cell C-24, Allama, (Kathmandu) 11300

Project One

Key members from prominent bands in Nepal come together to give their best performances. Line-up: Makh Shalhi, Robin Ram, Niran Shalhi, Das Mahanta, Sanor Shrestha, Basu Kanakari and Mithi Thaduri. 10 February, 5pm onwards, Club Rotemith, Thamel, (Nepal) 11400

Places Jazz night

A Jazz night with the band Dr Dandu Band with Balin on the bass and Chhini on the drums. Relax your weekends away from favisu drinks, delicious veg food and great performance. 8 February, 4-10pm, Places Restaurant & Bar, Thamel, (Nepal) 11400

Three Sisters

One World Theatre presents Arvind Chhetri’s. Three Sisters, a reprise of the classic drama by George Bernard Shaw. 8 February, 7pm onwards, Russian Centre for Culture and Science, Kanyakumari, Rs 200/500/1000, (Nepal) 11400

Bath tub

A bath tub by writers by Kumar Nagarkoti, directed by Chintu Thapaliya and starring Mr. Shyam. Arvind will not be seen, but only heard by eyes. 8-11 February, 4:30pm (except Tuesday, 4pm on Saturday), Shivar Theatre, Dadapati, (Nepal) 11400

Albatross

Transmitting the sound of Nepal’s aboriginal music and exploring contemporary issues of Nepal through lyrics. Albatross is back on stage to unite the audience together. 9 February, 7pm onwards, Cell C-24, Allama, (Kathmandu) 11300

The Chimney

Make your Valentine’s Day special with the restaurant’s decorated menu. Also get a chance to win a romantic dinner at the hotel’s Mulushan Garden, set up with candle lights and flower for two. 14 February, 5pm onwards, Great Wall & Ten, Donder Marg, Rs 6,000 (for couple, excluding taxes). (Nepal) 11400

Nepali Food Fiesta

Nepali Provincial Food Fiesta is an effort to promote authentic Nepali food from different parts of the country. Join in for a healthy and nutritious meal. 14 February, 12pm onwards, Thamel Eco Resort, Thamel, (Nepal) 11400

Friday night BBQ

Eddy BBQ with attractive musical and live Nepali folk music performance on a Friday evening with friends in family in Thamel. Every Friday, 7pm onwards, Cheshreea Villa Resort, Mahalab, Rs 2,000 (per person) (Nepal) 11400

Kava Restaurant

Celebrates the day of love with your loved ones and a specially cooked delicious Gurung cuisine dinner. 14 February, 6.30 to 10.30pm, (070007777) Kavapati, Thamel, Rs 499 (per couple) (Nepal) 11400

Around the Corner

A multi course vegetarian offering a pleasant squeeze to enjoy dinner date and sweet talks. 14 February, 12pm-10pm, Boudh, Rs 977271737

Rox Restaurant

Regale the passion on this unforgettable evening and share your partner with romance, gourmet four course dinner and the enormous array of live music. 14 February, 6:00pm onwards, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Rs 6,000 (per couple) + (Nepal) 11571729

The Chimney

Make your Valentine’s Day special with the restaurant’s decorated menu. Also get a chance to win a romantic dinner at the hotel’s Mulushan Garden, set up with candle lights and flower for two. 14 February, 5pm onwards, Great Wall & Ten, Donder Marg, Rs 6,000 (for couple, excluding taxes). (Nepal) 11400

Soraya Wellness

Deep into the interior of inner world with your loved one on the fences of Hitha. A romantic two-day retreat that includes yoga practices, chanting of mantras, sound healing sessions and guided meditation. 12-14 February, Hotel Country Village, Nagarkot, Rs 10,000/12,500 (per person), (Nepal) 11400

Hike to Nagarkot

Hike with people from around the world to one of the famous and heart rendering viewpoints of Nagarkot near Kathmandu. You can see the Himalayas, Gangchen, Shishu, Kung, Ghara, and the UNESCO world heritage site Changi Gompa temple. 14 February, 8:30am, Sandhya Tours and Treks, Kapan, Kathmandu, Rs 10,000/12,500, (Nepal) 11400

Hike with dogs

Go for a 2 hours hike with your dog to Tansen, Chapkdin, the profit earned will be used to feed 200 street dogs on Valentine’s Day. 14 February, 7:30am, Shikshya Nepali Saunsthan, Tansen, (Nepal) 11400

Hyatt Regency

Celebrate the month of love by indulging in a thoughtful partnership with your significant other. 60-minute aromatherapy massage, 30-minute express organic face mask, sauna, steam, whirlpool, and a glass of red wine. $200, $295

The Last Resort

Take a courageous jump, swing, or white water rafting at Blazer Rock. Pair up with your loved one this Valentine’s Day. Sandeshch, Siddhaopshich, (Nepal) 11400
Rape rulings in Nepal follow letter, not spirit of the law

TO THE STREETS: Activists protest the government’s inability to solve the rape and murder of Namita Panta, a teenager whose body was found near her home in Khinchuwa in July 2018. Below 15, and only 5-7 years if she is above 20, and there is also extra punishment if the victim is more than six months pregnant, or is disabled.

Those provisions are unfair because they assume that an adult female in good health cannot be raped, which is not the case,” says Uma Pandey, a lawyer at Women’s Rehabilitation Centre, (WORC), Nepal. In the case of adult women, investigation often veers towards what the woman was wearing, why she was out at a particular time, and attempts to blame the victim for provocative behaviour.

It is even more difficult for male victims: the law regarding paedophilia addresses male children, but rape laws specifically mention only ‘women’ as rape victims, leaving out men and transgender persons. Nepal’s laws are still based on patriarchal notions that a woman’s sexuality is the property of her male partner and not her/himself.

Even as international standards like CEDAW mention women’s sexual autonomy and consent in laws regarding rape, Nepal’s laws are still concerned about chastity, depriving many male and female victims of justice.

“Problems with our Criminal Justice System is that the government is not really focused on implementing it,” says Advocate Isha Tulsibahadur. “Our laws have improved, but there are still many loopholes.” Often, the government does not actually implement high sounding provisions, which means that we must question its intention. Does it really want to deliver justice, or is it just creating laws that look good?”

Rape survivors and victims of sexual abuse in Nepal are increasingly going public with their experience, but even if they file a complaint, it is doubtful if they will ever get justice given the loopholes in the law.

Nepal’s law does not match up to international standards: victims have only one year to report rape, the complaint procedure is stacked against them, and often there are no counsellors even for children. Most rape cases therefore go unreported, and the 1,900 complaints filed with police last year were just a small fraction of the actual cases.

In fact, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has asked Nepal to abolish the statute of limitations saying it denies victims the right to effective remedy, and is especially unfair to victims of war crimes.

Since most perpetrators are family members or lovers, persons, there is pressure on the victim not to register the case at all. The law mandates the presence of counselors for victims, but it is rarely implemented. Many victims, especially children, are therefore not able to open up in the presence of intimidating officials.

Most victims choose not to pursue cases because they do not know how to work the court system and do not have the resources to fight it out. Figures show that only 56% of rape cases are closed, and only about a quarter of the victims get a favourable verdict.

Even though a 2015 amendment broadened the definition of rape to include non-penile penetration, it is still rare for a court to convict such offenders. A Kathmandu School of Law report states that Nepal’s judiciary is “obsessively concerned with looking into elements such as penetration, use of force and completion of sexual intercourse by ejaculation” as primary grounds for conviction. In absence of such evidence, the courts tend to shift the charge of ‘rape’ to ‘attempted rape’.

Advocate Sushima Gautam says the situation is more favourable today as the Supreme Court has made landmark decisions based on the new laws, but she says not everyone is updated about the new laws. “Even some judges and lawyers are ignorant of what constitutes rape and operate on their traditional mindset which considers only penile penetration to be rape,” she explains.

Activists worry that the system favours the perpetrator rather than the victim. The severity of the punishment is based on the age of the victim, with 16 years of imprisonment if the victim is aged below 10, and only 6 years if she is above 20.

High quality editing, design, printing.

Complete publishing under one roof at Jagadamba Press.
A diverse and delightful feast

In the Chinese New Year, the Chinese Spring Festival has arrived in Nepal as well. This is the year of the pig, myth has it that the animal was the last to arrive at the Jade Emperor’s party, hence became the twelfth of all zodiac animals. He might have overslept then, but here in Kathmandu, this is one party that no one should miss.

Sothee Crowne Plaza is hosting a grand food festival to welcome the New Year at its specialize Chinese restaurant, Baix Xuang. Chef Sun wants the hotel to be a one-stop destination for the most thrilling flavors of the Chinese cuisine. The tables are all set and the waiters are standing by to serve guests a hearty feast.

The course starts with appetizers like Thai corn fritters with sweet chili dip, Japanese Yakitori Kagei and Pork Bun—all favorites of children—hence not spicy and hot. The Asian soup, which has double mushroom, water chestnut and nectar, is a creamy delight with flavors of coconut and lemon grass.

For the main course, there are special dishes like pan-fried salmon in tempura sauce from Japan, Pad Thai Nung, Mandarin-style sheep served with Korean Buckwheat noodle, Jasmine rice, or vegetable fried rice. According to Chef Sun, Chinese do not normally have desserts. Yet to end the celebration on a sweet note he has honey noodle with vanilla ice cream—also known as Daifuku, date pudding or Chinese spring roll. If that has made you drool, time to head off to Sothee.

Chef Sun is strict about the ingredients to be used in any dish, no matter how simple the dish is. For most authentic flavors, ingredients except for fresh vegetables, meat and seafood are sourced from abroad.

Asian food diversity and evolution has made a profound impact over the years. We want our guests to be enchanted by the taste which our experienced chef and his team have worked hard to produce,” says Kedar Pandey, Sothee’s F&B man.

Sothee Crowne Plaza makes use of the New Year festivities to bring together regional diversities in a non-confronting manner. Every dish has its own identity, but the many dishes complement each other. The Pan Asian Food Promotion as a whole is a pleasant culinary journey that represents not just the region’s most popular cuisine but its most treasured jewels.

Sikuma Rai

Pan Asian Food Promotion
6-15 February, Baixuan-Fusion of China, Sothee/Crowne Plaza, Kathmandu, 9881089222

Celebrate Valentine Night at SHANGRI-LA VILLAGE, POKHARA with your loved one

Supported by:

Shangri-La Village

Tel: 061-462222, 9831509092, 9856014666

FOR DETAILS:

Shangpatan, Pokhara, Nepal

www.hotelsangri-la.com

TOP OF THE WORLD: Ambassador of France to Nepal Francois Xavier Legue presents an autographed book by the first French alpinist to climb Mt Everest in 1978 Pierre Mazurad to Prime Minister KP Oli on Tuesday.

DEVELOPMENT VS DESTRUCTION: Environmental activists protest the proposed mass fishing of fish for the Nigdel Airport outside Singh Durbar on Wednesday.

MEN IN BLACK: British Ambassador Robhard Morris meets with Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa at Singh Durbar on Monday to talk about investment, corruption, impunity and disaster risk management in Nepal.

ON DUTY: Police, immigration and heritage site officials from Kathmandu, Pokhara, Chitwan and Limbuwa at the launch of a training for English language proficiency and operational skills organized by the US Embassy in Kathmandu on Monday.

SAFE SURFING: Youth from the Tamang community celebrate Sosum Cusals in a program organized to mark Safer Internet Day in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

ON DUTY: Police, immigration and heritage site officials from Kathmandu, Pokhara, Chitwan and Limbuwa at the launch of a training for English language proficiency and operational skills organized by the US Embassy in Kathmandu on Monday.
Why there is no foreign investment in Nepal

Rikas Thapa in
Antigua, Post media

The Nepal government is holding an investment summit in March in an effort to attract foreign investors in infrastructure projects. At a time when international interest in investing in Nepal is diminishing, the summit does seem ill-timed.

NCP chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal's statement about Venezuela has just put America's proposed $600 million Millennium Challenge Corporation aid for connectivity in jeopardy.

There is no point organizing an investment summit without policy and legal reforms. Commitments for billions of dollars were made even during previous investment summits, but the money was never forthcoming because of red tape and bureaucracy.

Besides, officials are not clear about where they want investments. We need investments not just in agriculture, tourism, hydropower and construction, but in almost every sector. Goods manufactured from imported raw material are not competitive, do not add value, and do not create adequate jobs.

Foreign investors need permission from the Department of Industry and the Central Bank, but it is next to impossible to get this without dispelling beliefs to bureaucrats. Recently, the contractor for the Melamchi water supply project could not finish its work because of extortion. The much-delayed project has now been pushed further back. The Prime Minister and Minister for Water Supply are not trying to resolve the issue. The secretary in the Ministry demanded a cut for arbitration compensation before releasing the money which is why the project is stuck.

With such high profile corruption how can Nepal expect foreign investment?
Learning from Nepal’s past

Kathmandu Valley rebuilt itself after every earthquake, preserving for posterity its traditional craftsmanship

Prakriti Kandel

It has been nearly four years after the 2015 earthquakes, and media reports about reconstruction of damaged buildings is mostly negative: compensation is too little and too late, it has not reached the neediest, and the process is too bureaucratic.

Indeed, only a fraction of the 70,000 buildings destroyed have been rebuilt with government help. Since the money is not enough, families are building small sheds so they can receive their third tranche.

However, in Kathmandu Valley’s historic towns, communities have revived age-old traditions and craftsmanship to rebuild after the earthquake just like their ancestors did after every previous disaster. In fact, along with tourism, earthquakes have provided the opportunity to revitalise ancient art, architecture, traditional techniques for wood carving and metal work.

“Earlier, it would not be possible to study the interiors of heritage structures, but the earthquake gave us the chance not just for building back stronger, but also for detailed research of how our ancestors knew about seismic resistant building designs,” says conservationist Alek Tulachar.

One of the most dramatic examples of this is the reconstruction of the three-storey Bhadraga Temple in Patan Durbar Square, which was razed in the 1934 megaseismic, and had been rebuilt with a Moghul era dome. Reconstruction in the original Malla style has just begun 80 years later, when the 2015 earthquake struck.

Nearby, the Chit Narayan and Jatti Shankar temples were reduced to rubble and ancient pati (traditional roof houses) came down. Today, most of the damaged monuments have either been rebuilt or are covered in scaffolding (right). Leading Faiz’s restoration work is the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT), which was supervising Bhadaga and other reconstruction even before the 2015 earthquake. KVPT’s architect Rohit Ranjitkar says the earthquake four years ago provided the opportunity to learn more about traditional construction methods so they could be revived.

In KVPT’s workshop in the Patan Durbar gardens, a dozen woodcarvers are busy with their chisels and mallets renovating damaged eaves and columns from the temples, and also carving new ones to replace missing originals. The descendants of famous artisans are carrying on their family professions and rebuilding after 2015, just like their forebears did after 1934, 1866, 1883 and other destructive earthquakes that struck Kathmandu Valley in the past.

KVPT’s reconstruction philosophy is to retain as much of the original pieces as possible, so woodcarvers work carefully to graft pieces salvaged from the rubble, ensuring that the fresh carvings perfectly complement the darker brown hues of the original wood structures.

One of the carvers, Pratap Shlipakar, takes a break and tells us, “I feel honoured and proud to contribute to help preserve our heritage and to repair these precious artifacts that were carved by our forefathers.” Shlipakar was working in his personal handicraft shop in Bhaktapur before being recruited by KVPT for the intricate task of replicating the originals.

Off the 17th century Pabhaka Pukhu at Sunita Chowk is a small temple where the four columns holding up the roof are from different centuries. Heritage expert Anil Chitrakar points them out: “Each of these columns are from a different era, harvested after every earthquake. Our ancestors knew how to improvise and rebuild as they went along.

To be sure, not many young Newa people today are too keen on taking up their ancestral profession of wood carving, which needs lifelong devotion and instruction to master. However, after 2015 there is renewed interest in preserving the built environment and Kathmandu Valley’s intangible heritage. Says Chitrakar: “As long as there is a critical mass of artisans to take it to the next generation, the craftsmanship will survive.”

Shlipakar (whose surname means ‘craftsman’) admits he has learned more about ancient styles and techniques while reconstructing Patan’s monuments — skills that he can incorporate into his handicraft business, now that tourism is on the rebound. Reconstruction has also been
Be a part of the careful reconstruction of Patan Durbar Square's temples and monuments. Discover how woodcarvers, metal artisans, masons, and architects are all hard at work to revive the traditional temples and heritage.

nepaltimes.com

A Tale of Two Cities

Of the ancient kingdoms of Kathmandu Valley, Patan and Bhaktapur have made the most progress in reconstruction because of the involvement of local communities and the activism of organizations like KVP.

It is in Kathmandu, the seat of the national government and the United Nations, that the progress in rebuilding monuments has been slowest. The government has waited four years to decide on the reconstruction of Kathmandu Durbar and Rani Pokhari. It is working hard to rebuild them with concern, ignoring traditional design styles.

Rivalry among donors like China and the United States, which have vied for high-profile reconstruction projects in Bhaktapur, Driski and Darbar Square, have added more pressure to the municipality.

Poon terrace stands from a recent Amaya, 48, shakes his head comparing his town with Kathmandu. "After four years, the key issues and the temples in Kathmandu are still in ruins. The central government has no love or ownership for our heritage."

In contrast, Patan has not just rebuilt more than a dozen temples like Pimpanda Phokha, but the reconstruction has revived the entire neighborhood, drawing thousands of tourists and giving locals an open space with a new amphitheater.

Such heritage activist Ashok Tikalwar says: "Kathmandu has waited too long. The government has targeted everything it has tried to push in Kathmandu."

a financial boost for carvers after plummeting business post-earthquake.

Besides woodworkers, the earthquake also helped revive artisans who worked on brick as they repaired the giant pinnacles damaged in 2015. Masons and clay workers who specialized in traditional dachiq appa bricks have also got new business after the earthquake.

Studies prove that structures which had been maintained regularly before the quake suffered minimal damage. Conservation is therefore an ongoing exercise, and important not just for a regular flow of skills amongst artisans, but also safety in preparation for the next big earthquake.

KVP's Ranjitkar says, "We apply the principle of minimal intervention to improve safety features of buildings, because human life comes first. The damage in the 2015 earthquake gave us further insight about the weak points that we need to work to strengthen."战国

Heritage hotel

Heritage hotels may have preserved Kathmandu Valley's culture in the past, but recent times it was a tourist that kept the craftsmanship alive. One of the prime examples of this is Dhulikhs' Hotel in Kathmandu that is more like a museum of how to treat wood. At the peak of Kathmandu Valley's heritage destruction in the 1970s, Dhulikhs' Hotel was a refuge for tourists. Since then, the hotel has been transformed into a museum that showcases the traditional craftsmanship of woodcarving. Along with collecting woodwork, carpenters created the hotel's furniture, traditional brick-making kilns were used for terracotta work. Today, many more Kathmandu homes, even private residences, have emulated the Dwak's model of preserving traditional woodcraft.
The Ass

For Your Eyes Only:
- Nepal's location will continue to be a closely guarded secret. The American Commander-in-Chief doesn't know where it is, let's try to keep it that way.
- The Cyber Warfare Unit of the ex-King Nepalese Army will infiltrate the Net and change all Wikipedia entries to The Federal Republics of Nepal and inflated the country's land area and population.
- Our northern border is protected by high mountains, but our open border to the south is easy to penetrate which is why we need to make an East-West Moul.
- The Nepal Academy of Science & Technology (NAS&T) should immediately begin planning exemption at its centers in Kathmandu. Experience from North and East has shown that the only way to face the international community is to act more seriously.
- Nepal's current diplomatic missions in permanent state of disarray as that entity APC will not be able to negotiate the potshas during a land mission.
- Nepal's landsmen under constant surveillance by sky surveillance, so Kathmandu should increase its Bnig population so we are more visible from space.
- Nepal should be careful about standing in the sun, but if they do, they should wear Groucho mustaches to disguise themselves.
- The Cabinet Room should be regularly swept for hidden microphones, and ministers should return from discussing state secrets with their wives since there may be bugged bugs.
- By now we have already demonstrated that this country is unvesselable. And that is the greatest interest of all, why would anyone in his right mind ever want to take us over?

www.nepalitimes.com

BACKSIDE

16